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AUTHOR Walz, Garry R.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This survey of the Midwest Career Placement Association members (N=264) used an eight-page questionnaire to elicit responses to questions about the nature of subjects' career planning and placement programs and subjects' judgment regarding future trends and developments in career planning and placement as well as future emphases in their centers. Results of the survey indicated: (1) the majority of subjects did not see their alumni career services as especially effective; (2) ratings for career services for adults were notable for the relatively low ratings and the increase in the two top ratings over the alumni ratings; (3) relatively few subjects believed they were effective in their career services for multi-ethnic students; (4) career center staff believed technology was an important aspect of career functioning; (5) career center staff did not see the internationalizing of the career center in terms of career information as of much importance or a function that was being effectively performed; (6) job fairs were seen as a very important aspect of a career planning program; (7) marketing was a topic of major importance for career center staff; and (8) subjects were reasonably positive in rating current strategies in assisting students to find jobs, with almost one-half believing they were doing an above average job. (ABL)

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CAREER CENTER 2000

Report of a Survey of Members of the Midwest College Placement Association

Presented by

Garry R. Walz
Director and Professor

Jeanne C. Bleuer
Associate Director

John W. Mosser
Career Consultant

ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse
School of Education
The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

MCPA
Chicago, Illinois
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Introduction

This report prepared for the MCPA Conference in Chicago, Illinois, August 29, 1990 presents the results of a survey of MCPA members done in the summer of 1990. The survey consisted of an eight-page questionnaire which was designed to elicit responses from the respondents as regards: (1) the nature of their career planning and placement program, and (2) their judgment regarding future trends and developments in career planning and placement as well as future emphases in their own center. Questionnaires were mailed to 570 individual MCPA members with 264 useable questionnaires returned for a response rate of 43%—an unusually high return given the time of the year, the amount of time required to complete the questionnaire and the lack of a follow-up to the non-respondents. As adjudged by both the relatively large return and the obvious effort put into the completion of the questionnaire, the topics covered in the questionnaire were apparently of great interest to MCPA members. All respondents to the survey will receive a copy of the report and be publicly acknowledged for their contribution.

Purpose of the Survey

The survey was designed with a number of objectives in mind and to have both immediate and long-term utility. Among the more important objectives of the survey were the following:

- To assess MCPA member perceptions of future trends and developments in career planning and placement centers.
- To identify MCPA member use of ERIC and their recommendations for new ERIC/CAPS products and services.
- To obtain qualitative information about innovations in career planning and placement programs and practices.
- To develop a database on career planning and placement programs for use in further research and program and services planning and development by ERIC/CAPS and by relevant MCPA committees.

The Survey Questionnaire and the Response Data

The questionnaire was designed to elicit information that would serve a wide variety of needs and interests. This report covers only a portion of the significant and useful results. Subsequent reports will cover in greater detail the full results of the survey plus focus on topics of special interest. This report is focused upon providing the survey results relating to 12 specific questions presented on a five-point likert scale relating to how well a given career center was responding to a particular aspect of the center's activity, e.g., effectiveness of career services for alumni. Additionally, the questions also focused on the future importance of some facet of the center's activity, e.g., importance of the role of technology on future development of the career center.

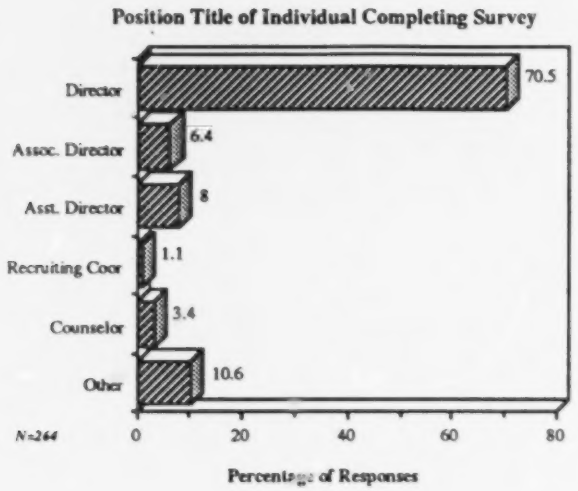
The responses to the survey were received from staff members employed in community colleges (N=29), four-year colleges (N=75) and universities (N=153). A large number of institutions are represented in the results, but the responses are by individuals and any given institution may be represented by several respondents in the same or different career centers on that campus. Also, it should be noted that the respondents in large measure (70.5%) were directors (Table I). Therefore, in interpreting the results it should be recognized that the larger institutions—universities—are especially well represented, and the responses are those of individuals (rather than the consensus of a center's staff) who for the most part see the center through the eyes of someone who has the overall responsibility for managing it.

Discussion of Results

The responses from the 264 completed questionnaires were coded on 147 variables, entered into a Macintosh (using Microsoft Word), then uploaded to The University of Michigan mainframe computer (MTS), analyzed for statistical analysis using MIDAS and then downloaded for formatting and table generation.

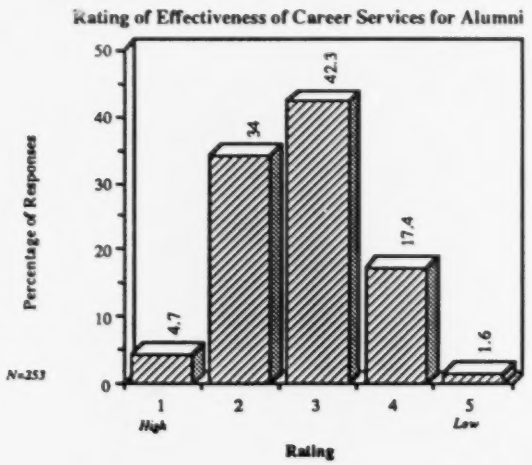
The main body of results for this report are contained in 13 tables and a Conclusions and Recommendations concluding section. Each table will be presented with a brief discussion.

Table I



Discussion: As previously mentioned, directors were overwhelmingly the respondents to this survey. This may reflect the importance they attach to the survey—it also may provide a more positive view of how well centers are functioning than those not so closely identified with the operation of the center would report.

Table II

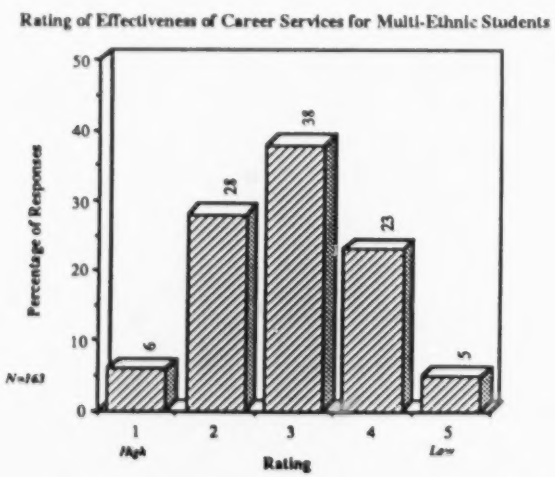


Discussion: The effectiveness of career services for alumni would seem to be somewhat better than a normal distribution, but clearly not a standout area as only 38.7% report a greater effectiveness than a middle ranking. Clearly, the majority of respondents do not see their alumni career services as being especially effective.

Table III

Discussion: The ratings for career services for adults are notable for the few relatively low ratings and the increase in the two top ratings over the alumni ratings. It is notable, however, that less than 1/10th of the respondents would rate the success of their adult career services as "high."

Table IV



Discussion: The effectiveness of career services for multi-ethnic students is notable for both the relatively high number of low responses (18% for #4 and #5) and the relatively few respondents (6%) who believe they are really effective in their career services for multi-ethnic students. With the projected increases in student enrollment from multi-cultural backgrounds, this result obviously poses many questions for career center effectiveness in the future.

Table V

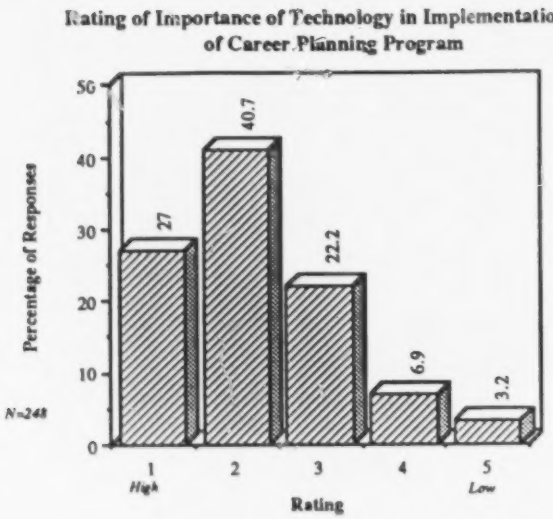
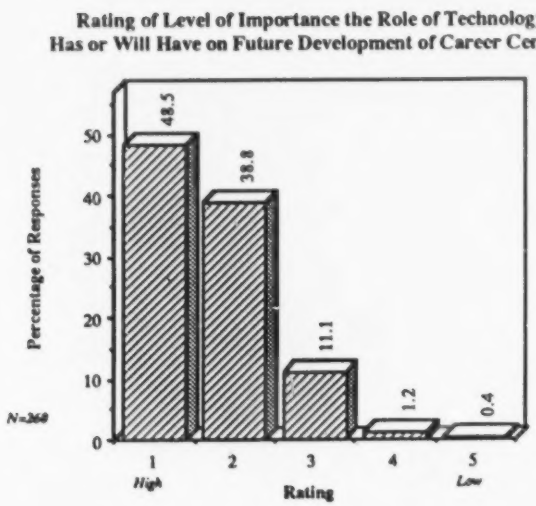


Table VI



Discussion: There appears to be little question that career center staff believe technology to be an important aspect of career center functioning. As suggested by Table VI, there is an extremely high belief in the importance and role of technology in the future. There are important implications in this result for budget prioritization and the possible disappointment in tangible returns that many organizations experience with a major increase in the use of technology.

Table VII

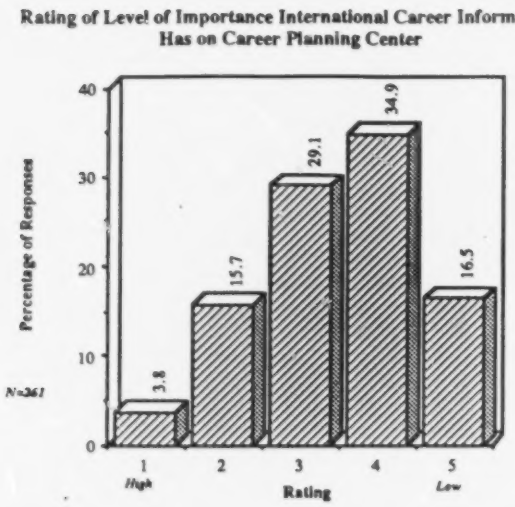
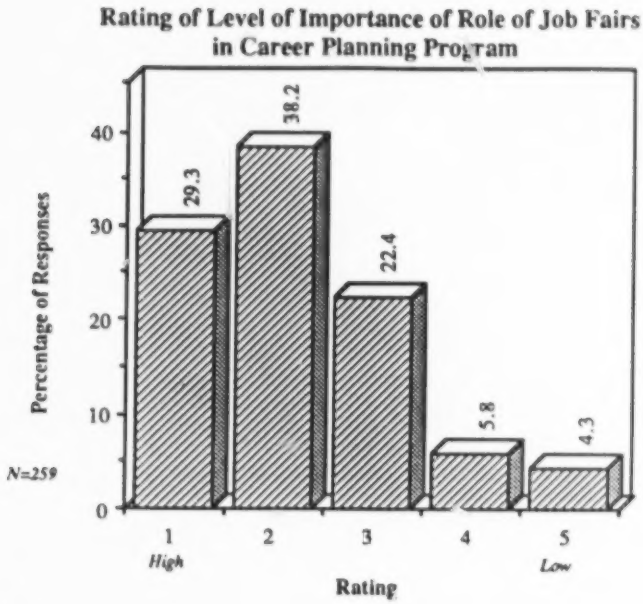


Table VIII

Discussion: It is apparent that career center staff do not see the internationalizing of the career center in terms of career information as of much importance or a function that is currently effectively performed. These results raise serious questions as to the ability of career centers to keep pace with the internationalization of the job market and the impact of multi-national corporation employment upon our career planning practices.

Table IX



Discussion: It would appear that job fairs are seen as a very important aspect of a career planning program. This result probably reflects the high comfort level and effectiveness with which most career centers present job fairs.

Table X

Table XI

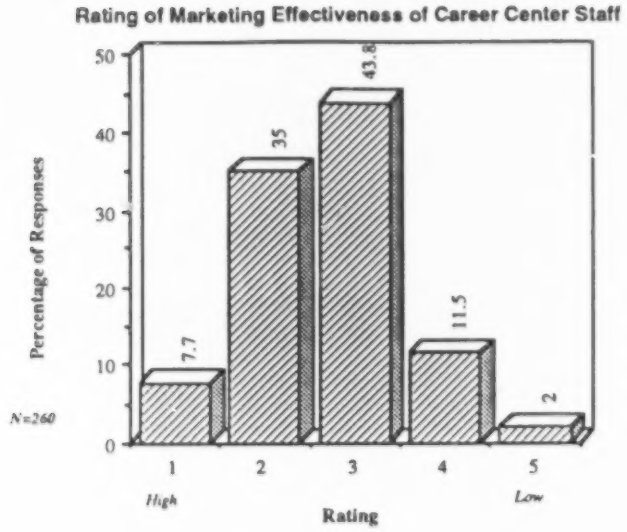
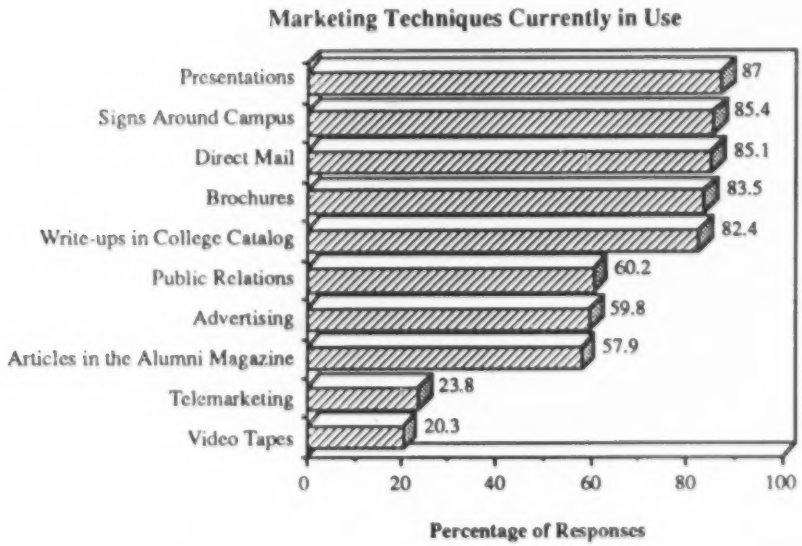


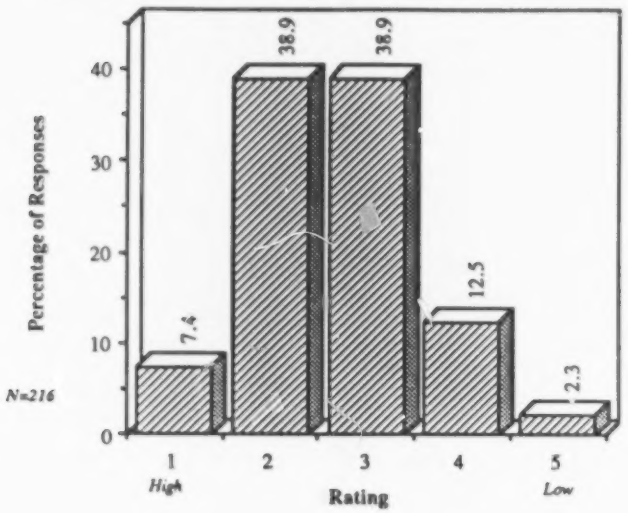
Table XII



Discussion: Marketing stands out in this survey as being a topic of major importance for career center staff. However, they evidently do not believe their actual marketing effectiveness is commensurate with the importance they attach to it. Only 42.7% rate themselves above a middle rating on effectiveness whereas 85.7% used the same rating categories for "importance." It is apparent, however, that the career centers are showing considerable versatility in employing a variety of marketing techniques and procedures.

Table XIII

Rating of Current Strategies in Assisting Students to Find Jobs



Discussion: The respondents appear to be reasonably positive in rating current strategies in assisting students to find jobs. Almost half believe they are doing an above average job.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions, implications and recommendations are drawn from the previously presented data plus other data from the questionnaires not presented in a graph format.

Conclusions

1. Members of MCPA demonstrated an extremely high interest in the survey and the results and, to an unusually high degree, returned questionnaires displaying thoughtful and conscientious answers.
2. Career centers attach a high level of importance to traditional career center functions, e.g., job fairs.
3. Great importance is attached to the present and future role of technology in career center operations. There is a potential "over belief" in what technology can do and a underestimate of its real cost to the center.
4. Over half the respondents have conducted an ERIC database search, but only a third are currently using ERIC resources for program and professional development.
5. Marketing is viewed as of major importance to career centers, but the level of marketing delivery is apparently below the importance attached to it as seen by the lack of a written marketing plan or a single person in charge.
6. Emerging areas of criticality in career center functioning such as international career information, multi-cultural student needs, and alumni and adult student career services appear to be areas needing greater emphasis and resources.
7. There is an apparent strong need by centers for a source of reliable market research dealing with student employment goals and employer hiring needs. The majority of career centers are **not** conducting their own research regarding student or employer needs.
8. Career planning and placement centers appear to lack a viable source of ideas and resources for program and practice innovation. A strong need exists for an improved means for the retrieval of relevant research information and for program and practice sharing of successful innovations between career centers.

Recommendations

- The survey results should be used by the MCPA Professional Development Committee as a source of possible program ideas.

- Study results could be used by the MCPA Research Committee as a listing of possible focus areas for guiding future Steele Research Fellowships.
- Career planning and placement staff can to their great personal advantage increase their contributions to and use of the ERIC system.
- A number of means for increasing the collaboration between career planning and placement centers and ERIC/CAPS should be explored, including the ERIC/CAPS Partnership Program and joint research, projects, and conferences.